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AUTHOR	Fiedler, Judith
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ABSTRACT

Interviews with 814 applicants for admission to the University of Washington who were not offered admission, or who did not enroll, were conducted during the summer and autumn of 1978. The respondents, whether or not they met admission criteria, were highly similar in characteristics of background, career aspiration, and alternative educational activities. The majority of the applicants planned to enter other colleges or universities in the state system. Most of the respondents anticipated continuing or completing their education at the University of Washington in the future. The results were analyzed, with portions presented in graphs and tables. The survey instruments used for the two groups are appended. (Author/MSE)

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EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

December 20, 1978

Survey of Applicants for Admission to the University of Washington in Autumn Quarter, 1978

PART I:

Applicants Not Admitted, or Not Accepting Offers of Admission

Judith Fiedler

Summary

Interviews with 814 applicants for admission to the University of Washington who were not offered admission, or who did not enroll, were conducted during summer and autumn of 1978. The respondents, whether or not they met University admission criteria, were highly similar in characteristics of background, career aspiration, and alternative educational activities. The majority of the applicants planned to enter other colleges or universities in the state system, in lieu of the UW. Most of the respondents anticipated continuing or completing their education at the UW in the future.

EAC Project Number: 549

EAC Report Number: 79-10

Introduction

Eighteen-thousand two-hundred and five individuals entered into the application process for admission as undergraduates or fifth-year students at the University of Washington for Autumn Quarter, 1978. Of these potential students, 7,332 registered and were present in classes after the tenth day of the quarter. What happened to the others? Some, of course, were denied admission, for any one of a number of reasons. A smaller group began but did not complete their applications; their reasons for not following the procedures may have reflected lack of interest, a preference for other options, fear of not having the qualities which would win them admission, or sheer carelessness. And still other applicants were offered admission and did not accept, or accepted the offer, paid a $50.00 fee to hold their place in the class, but failed to appear on September 25. Those people who made some gesture toward, but did not enter, the University may have chosen instead to attend another institution, to postpone their education, or to reject any thought of further schooling. Whatever their reasons, their decisions had strong effects on the University's operations and planning.

For many years the University has conducted research into the characteristics, plans, and academic careers of its students. Similar studies on non-students have rarely been conducted. In the summer of 1978, however, the Office of the Provost requested that the Educational Assessment Center study the alternative options and activities of applicants who do not attend, and the effects of University acceptance or rejection.

Non-attendees, as defined in this study, consist of five groups: those whose applications are incomplete; those who do not meet UW scholarship or credit criteria; those denied due to lack of space in their requested field or program (including those meeting minimum admission index scores, but below the cut-off);

applicants offered admission who do not enroll, and enrollees who indicate their intention to attend by paying the $50.00 fee, but who withdraw early or do not in fact appear. Table 1 presents the numbers of applicants in each category for the period of the study.

Table 1

Distribution of Applicants to the UW for Admission in Autumn, 1978*

	Undergraduates		Fifth-Year
	Freshmen	Transfer#	
A. Total number of applicants	9,723	7,124	1,358
Incomplete applications	883	1,868	153
Denied for scholarship reasons	838	654	9
Denied for space reasons	793	317	153
Offered admission	7,209	4,285	1,043
B. Total offered admission	7,209	4,285	1,043
Offer not accepted	2,950	1,046	23
Offer accepted ($50 fee paid)	4,259	3,239	812
C. Total accepted offers	4,259	3,239	812
Registered on first day	3,675	2,731	685
No-shows and withdrawals	584	508	127

Methodology

A random sample of applicants in each category of non-admittees (1. Incomplete application; 2. Scholarship denial; 3. Space denial; 4. Offer not accepted; and 5. No-show) was selected from the Admissions files. Telephone interviews were conducted with applicants in each category, following the schedules which appear

*UW Registrar's Office Admission Summary Report, October 11, 1978 (10th-day report).

#Transfer students include all those entering with any number of earned credits at the college level, but who have not already earned a degree.

as Appendices A (for Groups 1, 2 and 3) and B (for Groups 4 and 5). Additional information was drawn from the application (Appendix C). These data were tabulated and analyzed.

The difficulties of conducting interviews with this population are primarily mechanical ones. The applicants, once they have been located and contacted, are almost invariably cooperative and willing to participate, articulate, and interested in the questions. Locating them is the hard part. Although each application carries the name, permanent address, and usually the telephone number of the applicant, these quickly become outdated. The problem becomes increasingly acute with academic standing. High school seniors who apply for admission as first-year students normally are living at home with their parents, and these permanent addresses can be expected to remain stable for the time between application and college entry. Older applicants, living independently, tend to shift base frequently. This is particularly true of students with advanced standing, who typically apply to the UW while they are residents at other institutions during the academic year. By the time their applications are acted upon, their classes are over, and they have left their school year housing. In these cases, so-called "permanent" addresses may be very temporary indeed. Given a population of which the determining characteristic is that they will not be residents at the UW at some indefinite point in the future, and therefore have no reason to make their whereabouts known, conversing with them by telephone requires major effort. In an unfortunately large portion of the sample, these efforts were unavailing. The numbers selected for the study sample, and the results of attempts to contact them, are shown in Table 2. The response rates which were achieved with applicants denied admission, and for those who did not accept the opportunity to attend the UW,

are respectable by usual survey standards for telephone interviews. Attempts to interview those who did not complete their applications, on the other hand, fell far short of satisfaction. For the most part, non-respondents in this group did not provide current addresses or telephone numbers, or did not remain where they had been during the application process. Intensive efforts to locate many of them proved inadequate.

Table 2

Response Characteristics

	Group 1 Incomplete Applications	Group 2 Scholarship Denial	Group 3 Space Denial	Group 4 Offer Not Accepted
Total population	2,904	1,501	1,263	4,019
Sample size	342	236	211	509
Interviewed	163	173	142	336
Refused	2	0	0	2
Non-contact	177	63	82	163
Response rate (Interviews ÷ sample)	48%	73%	67%	66%

The study was conducted in two parts. One, prior to and at the beginning of Autumn Quarter, interviewed applicants who were denied admission or who failed to signify acceptance of admission. The results of these interviews are reported here. The so-called "No-shows," applicants who were accepted and paid the $50.00 deposit to secure their places but who were not in residence after the 10th day of classes, were interviewed in October and November, 1978. The results of the second part of the study will be reported during Winter Quarter, 1979.

Demographic Characteristics

Investigation of a number of demographic variables was included in the study, either as part of the interview, or in the information derived from the applications. While few systematic differences based on sex are found, women applicants were more likely (28% vs. 20%) to have applied for admission as transfer students from other 4-year institutions, and to be now attending that same type of school. The ages of the respondents are, of course, directly related to their schools of origin, with younger respondents applying from high schools, and older applicants, in general, coming from 4-year rather than 2-year institutions. The mean age of all applicants was 19 for applicants in groups 1, 2, and 3, and 18 for those who did not accept their offers of admission. Among applicants for the first year, only one had graduated from high school before 1975.

The parents of the applicants were college-educated in from 30 to 40% of the families. Twelve of the applicants themselves already had a B.A. or B.S. degree. Their career aspirations in almost all cases were for professional-level occupations, largely those requiring specialized training or advanced degrees. Almost all the applicants were Washington state residents, and the great majority were white. Except for applicants in Group 4, the distribution by sex was roughly the same as that of the UW student population as a whole.

Seventy percent or more of the applicants reported their permanent homes as being in Seattle or within a 30-mile radius (King, Pierce, Kitsap or Snohomish Counties). A summary of the respondents' demographic characteristics appears in Table 3.

Table 3

Demographic Characteristics (% of respondents)

PRIOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION	Incomplete Applications	Scholarship Denial	Space Denial	Offer not Accepted
High school	26%	51%	58%	59%
2-year school	38	33	19	11
4-year school	36	15	22	30
	100%	100%	100%	100%
RESIDENCE				
In-state	98%	99%	98%	99%
Out of state	2	1	2	1
	100%	100%	100%	100%
SEX				
Male	57%	56%	54%	43%
Female	43	44	46	57
	100%	100%	100%	100%
ETHNIC ORIGIN				
White American	80%	94%	86%	87%
Black	9	1	6	5
Chicano/Hispanic	5	1	2	3
Asian American	1	2	2	2
Foreign	1	0	4	1
American Indian	4	2	0	2
	100%	100%	100%	100%
PERMANENT ADDRESS LOCATION				
Seattle	32%	28%	39%	29%
King, Pierce, Kitsap or Snohomish	39	42	48	44
Western Washington, north of Snohomish	3	8	3	4
Western Washington, south of Pierce	7	9	3	8
Eastern Washington	17	13	7	15
Out of state*	2	0	0	0
	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Sample specifications called for state residents. These were included in error.

Results

This report presents the results of interviews with applicants who were not admitted to, or chose not to attend, the University of Washington. The general organization of the report is to give analyses and interpretations of the data separately for non-admitted and for non-accepting applicants. Within each of these two categories, cross-tabulations break out the data by such variables as type of originating school (high school for first-year applicants, 2-year or 4-year institutions for transfer students), present occupation or activity, sex, ethnic identification, etc. For the most part, the data are shown in terms of percentages responding to a particular question, or providing items of archival information.

Section 1 - Applicants not admitted to the UW

Failure to gain admission to the University of Washington does not prevent the majority of applicants from continuing their education. Not only will they seek and enter some other school, they will take this alternative seriously. Of the students who chose other 4-year institutions, 96% plan to or now are attending full-time, while 74% of the applicants who shifted their interest to a community college are also full-time students. Non-admittees' present activities are shown in Figures 1, 2, and 3.

Figure 1

Non-Admittees' Activities in Autumn, 1978

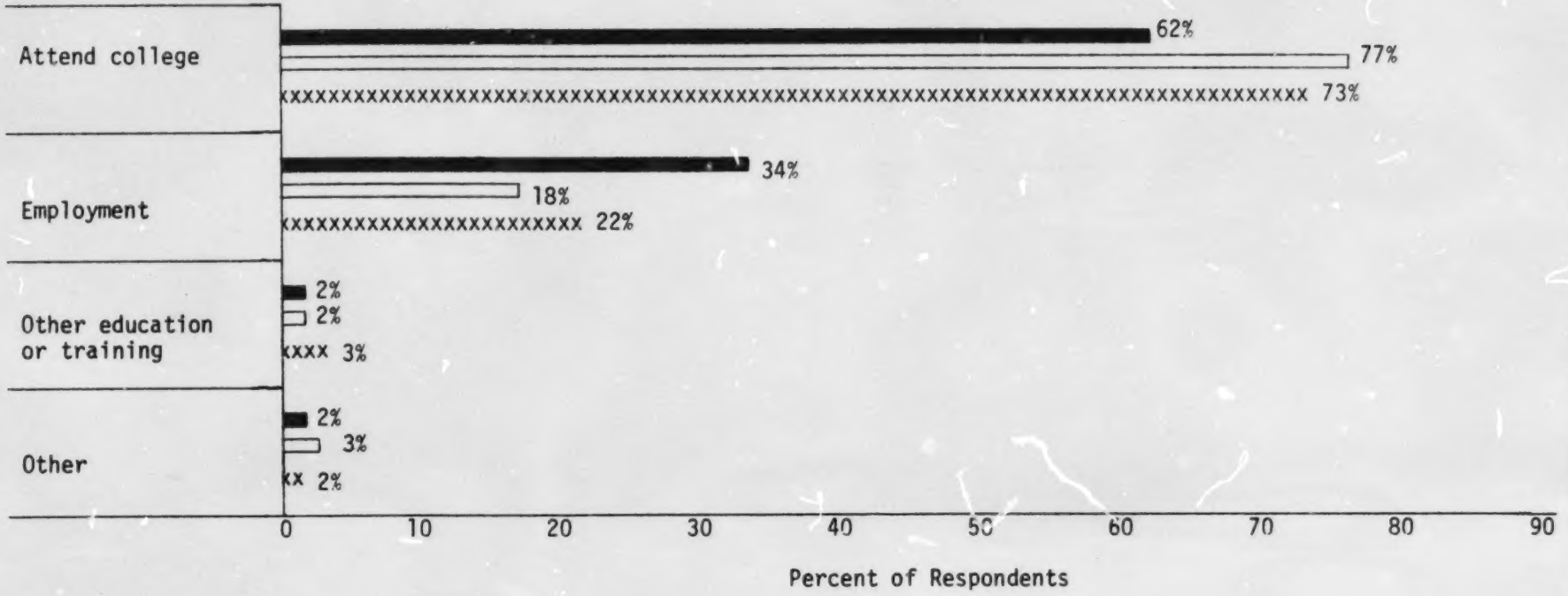
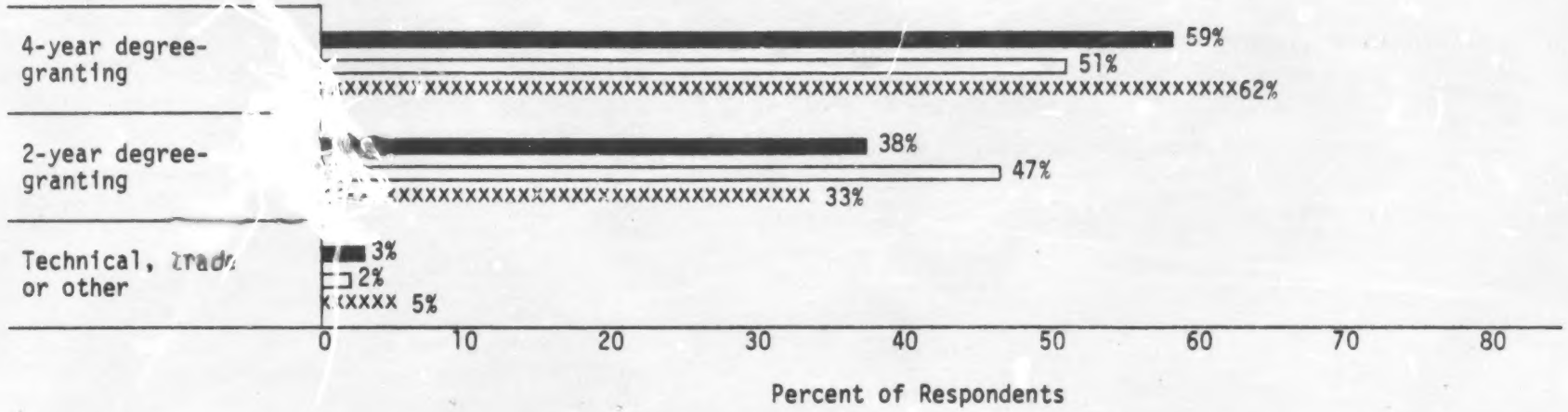


Figure 2

Type of Alternative Educational Institution*

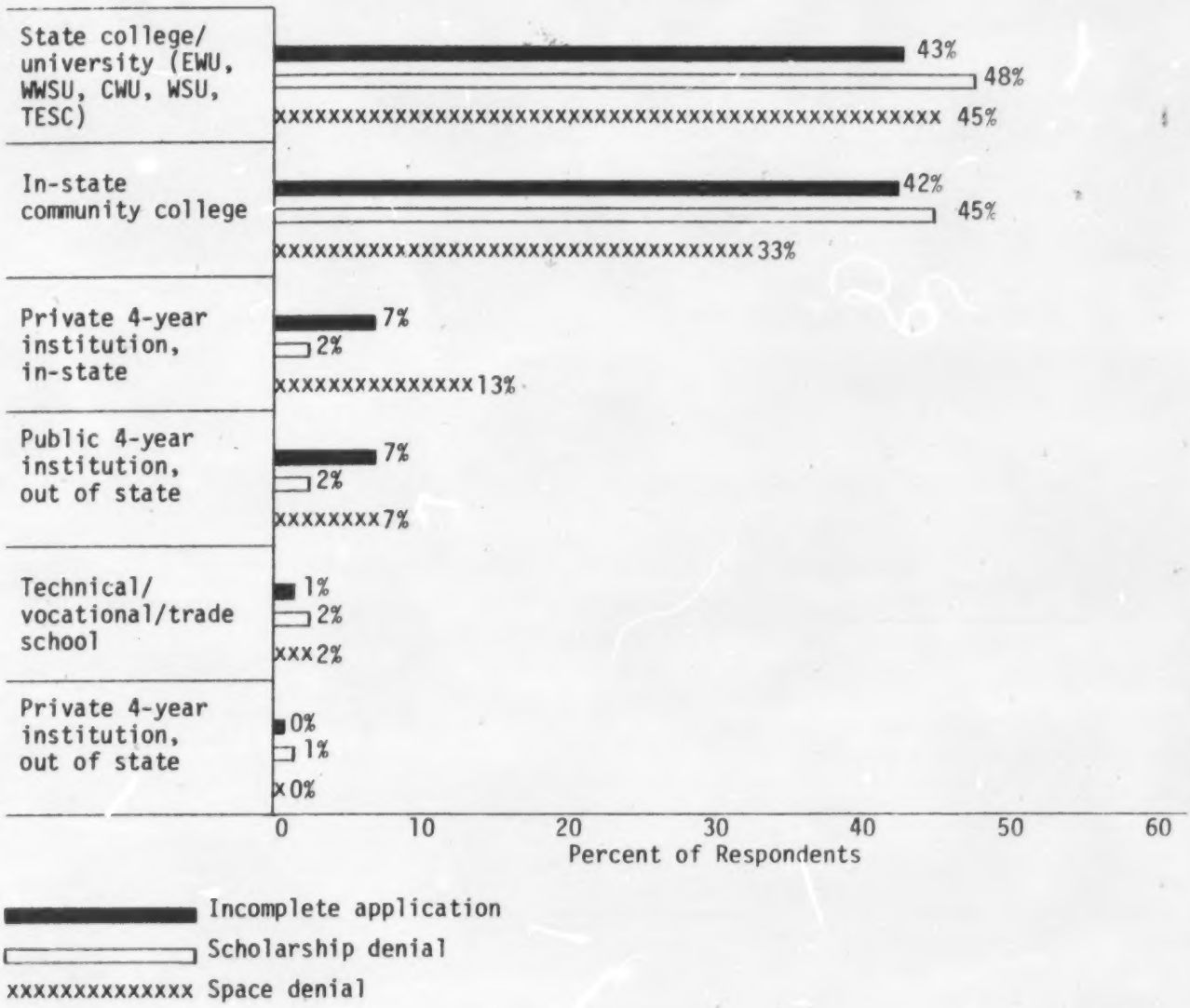


*Responses of applicants reporting continued education.

Almost all of the students not admitted to the UW remain in Washington, for the most part, as students in other branches of the state system. Slightly over half enter 4-year institutions, usually in the public sector. Figure 3 shows the location of these alternative institutions.

Figure 3

Location of Alternative Educational Institutions*

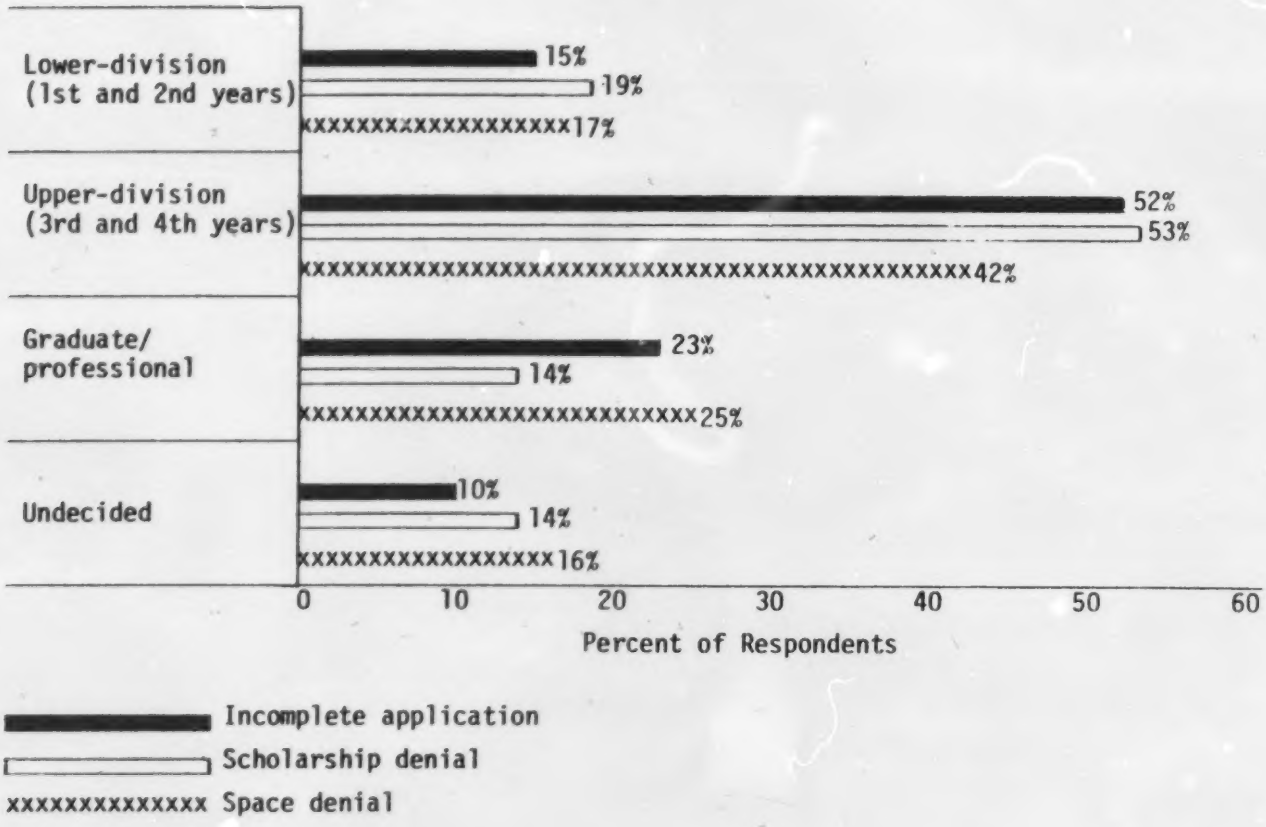


*Applicants reporting continued education.

Matriculation at another institution, however, does not mean that the respondents do not look to the UW for future education. Seventy-four percent say that they will seek some part of their education at the UW. Interestingly, roughly comparable proportions of each of the three groups have this intention. The largest number expect to complete undergraduate work here, as Figure 4 shows.

Figure 4

Plans for Future Education at the UW



Women applicants are somewhat less sure of their future plans in relation to the UW. Eighteen percent, in contrast to 10% of the male respondents, say that they are undecided about reapplying. Women who do intend to obtain some part of their later education here will do so at a later time than will men. Twenty-one percent of the male respondents expect to be admitted for Winter or Spring Quarter, 1979, while only 14% of the women will apply for entrance so soon.

Respondents who are now students at community colleges, in the majority of cases, intend to stay there for two years. Sixteen percent of the students in 2-year institutions hope to enter the UW as first or second year students, while 68% plan to take their Junior and/or Senior years here. Respondents who are now students at other state 4-year institution, on the other hand, are less likely to shift to the UW. Even among this group, however, 51% intend to spend some part of their college years at the UW, 41% in the latter two years. For graduate training, 21% of all respondents select the UW. Candidates for graduate school are most likely to have entered 4-year institutions in lieu of the University of Washington.

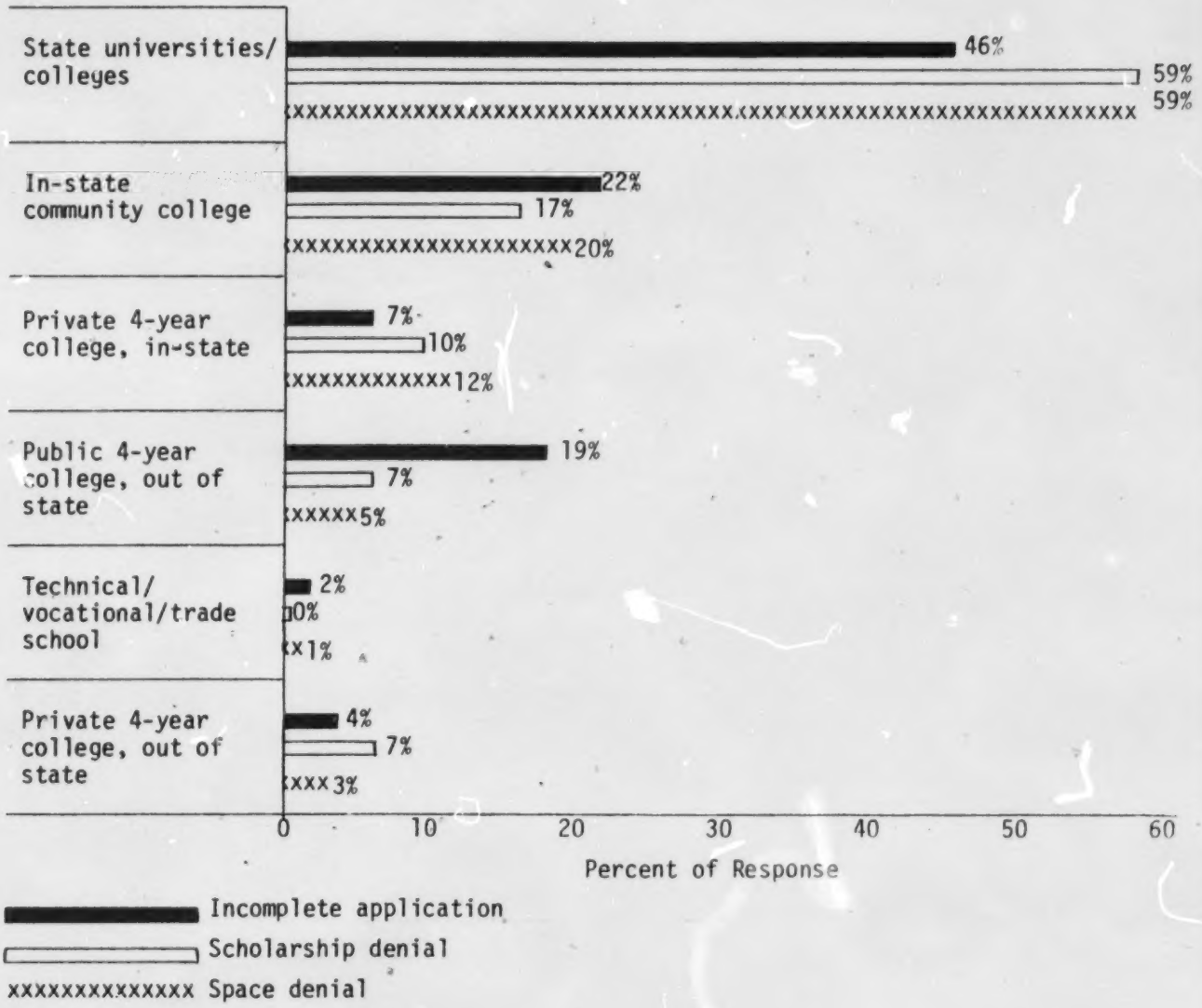
Of the respondents who do not plan any future education at the UW, the most frequently cited reason is that, having begun work at another institution, s/he preferred to remain there (52%). Smaller numbers of respondents mentioned negative reactions to the University, such as considering it too big (16%), or annoyance/disappointment at being rejected (29%).

Sixty-six percent of the respondents submitted an application to at least one other school, with smaller numbers requesting admission to more than one. Of those who did not complete their applications, 88% were accepted by at least one other college. The ratio of acceptances by other institutions rises for applicants denied admission at the UW. Ninety-four percent of the scholarship

denials, and 91% of space denials went to applicants who were offered admission elsewhere. Which alternative applications were submitted is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5

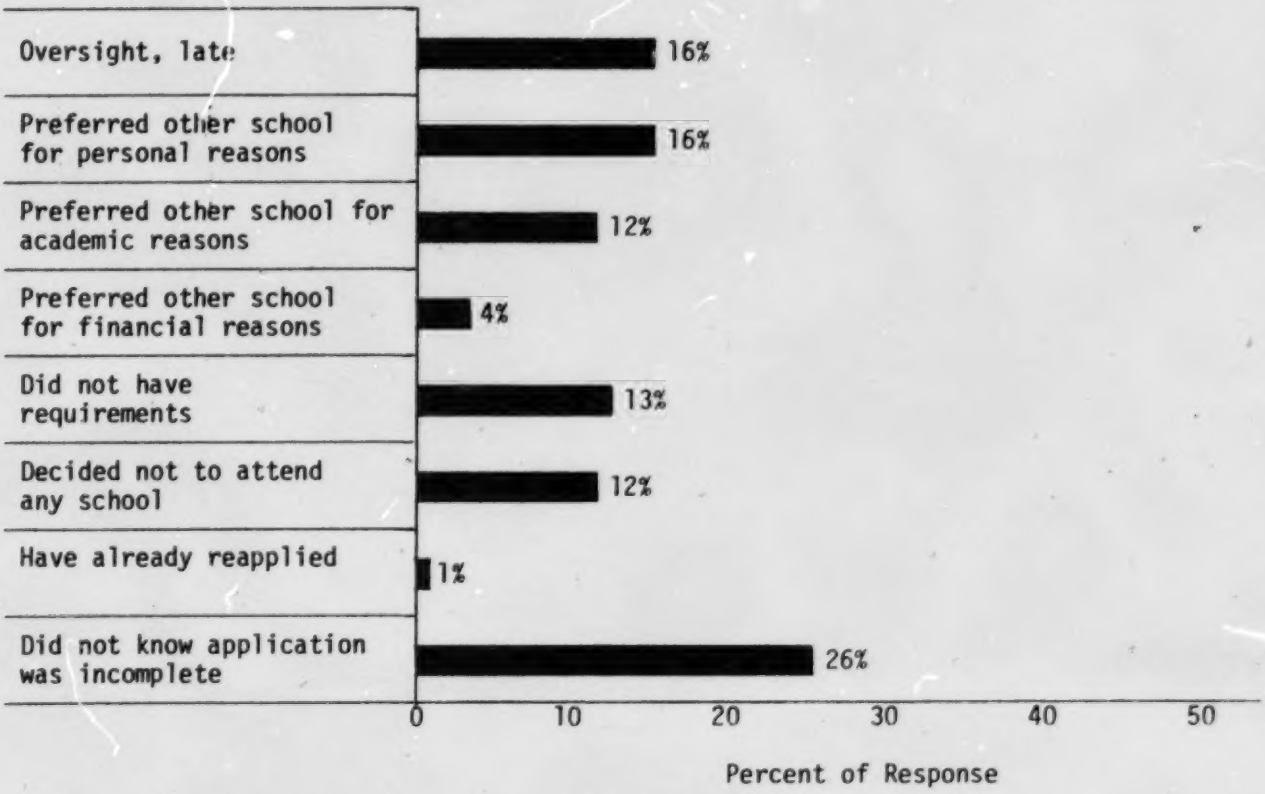
Other Applications Submitted



Incomplete applications were not the result of accident or error on the part of the majority of respondents. Rather, as Figure 6 indicates, failure to complete the forms or process was most likely to reflect second thoughts about attending the University, decisions in favor of some other course.

Figure 6

Reasons for Failing to Complete Application



Those applicants who report oversight, late application, or ignorance, however, suggest that University efforts to improve communication with potential students and their parent institutions are needed. Applicants from high schools were least likely to know that their records were incomplete. It is probable that their lack of sophistication about college-level procedures and inexperience with educational systems limited their ability to follow through in this area. Respondents were most likely to know if their high school transcripts were missing, while 30% said they did not know that a test was necessary, and had not taken it.

Applicants who do not enter the University do not perceive serious deleterious effects arising from their situation. In fact, the most common response* to questions about the result of not entering is that there is no, or little, effect. The question, of course, refers to immediate events or sensations; there are no data to estimate or describe the long-term impact. In the short-term, however, the respondents appear able to shift their plans with minimal stress. Approximately half intimate that not attending the UW made little difference to them, and others report effect only insofar as it represents change in their educational activities, without suggesting that the change is painful or costly. Some effects on living or social arrangements are reported, but these are easily explainable as they relate to enrollment at different institutions. Least affected are respondents who did not complete the application, perhaps because failing to complete it was the result rather than the cause of their changed situations.

There are several possible interpretations of the data. The applicants may have, in fact, cared little about attending the UW. In the case of those who did not accept the offer of admission, the UW may have been in fact a "fail-safe" choice, to fall back on only if other, more desirable, institutions were not possible. These applicants may have been pleased not at being offered admission by the UW so much as they were relieved not to have to accept it. It is harder to see non-admitted applicants in this role. Yet, as Figure 7 shows, substantial numbers of these respondents also report minimal effect from their rejection.

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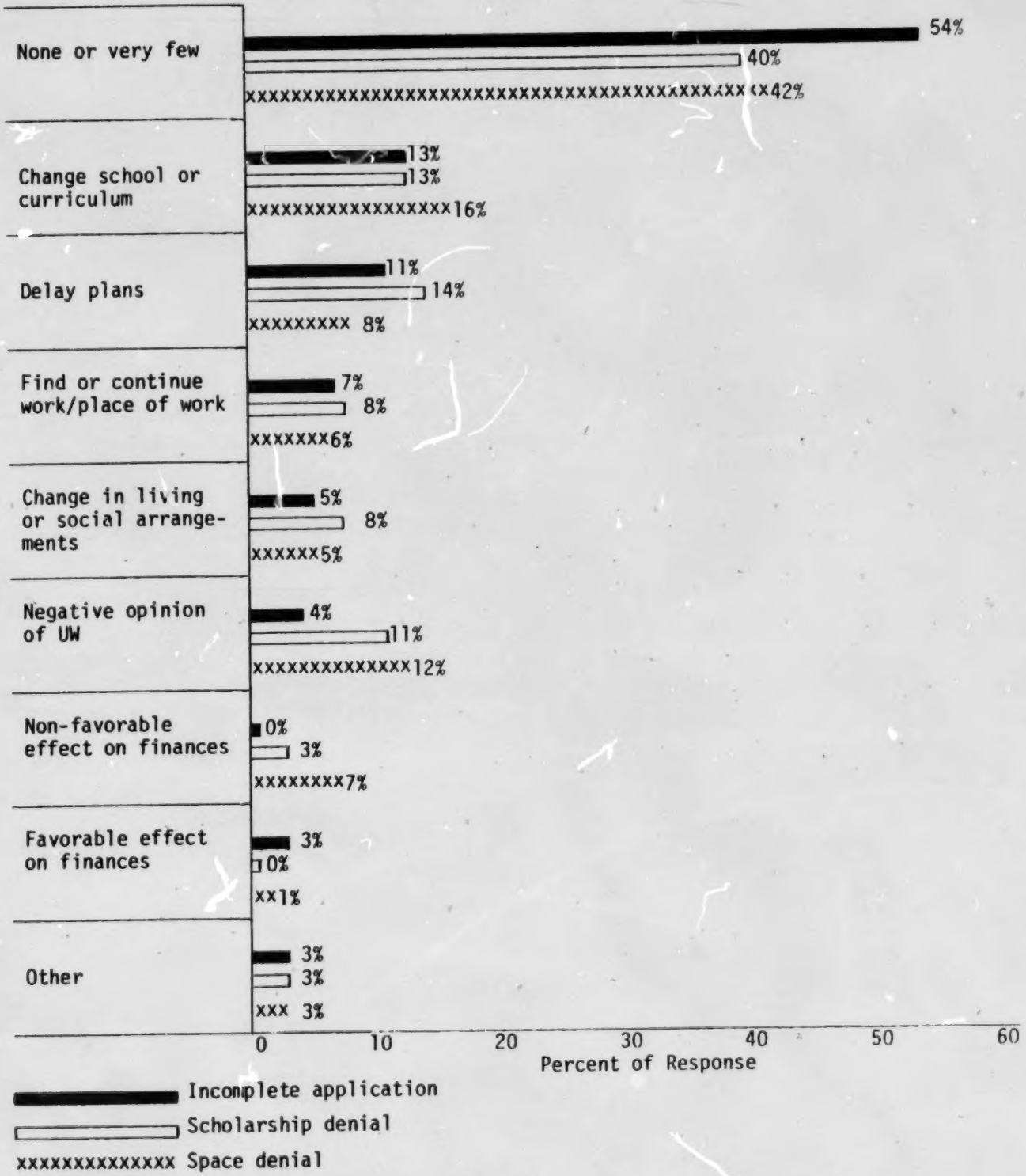
*Responses to the question on the effect of admission status, and on the resultant changes are here collapsed into a single analysis.

Figure 7

Immediate Effects of Not Entering the University

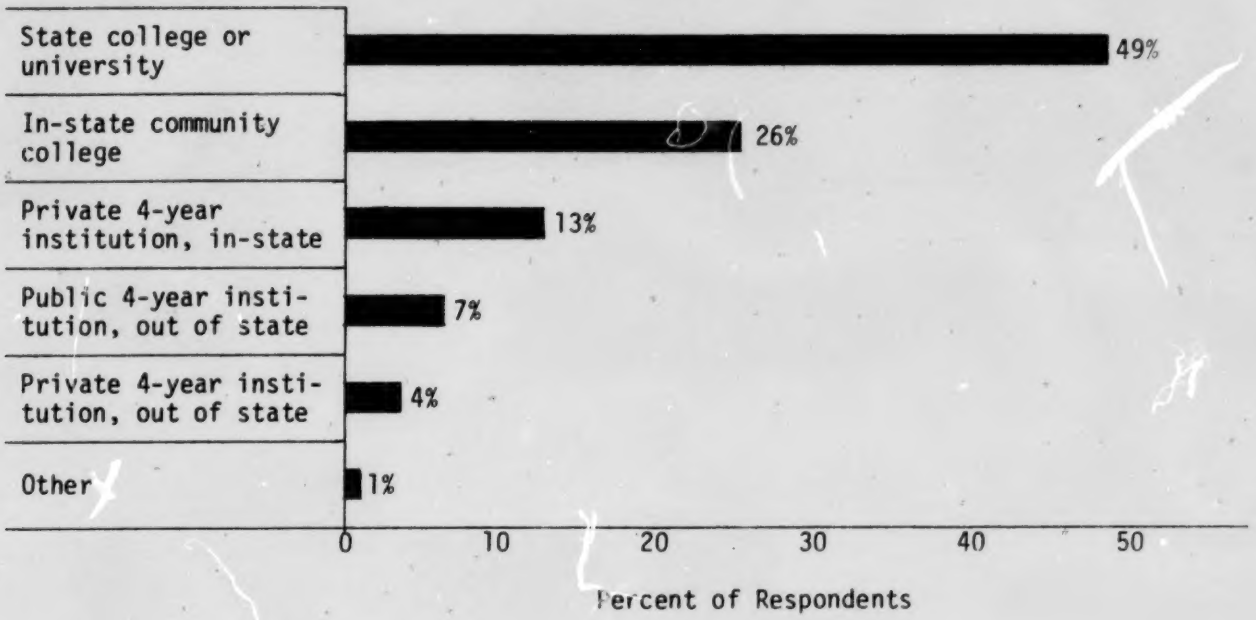


Section 2 - Applicants who do not accept the University's offer of admission

Eighty-one percent of the non-enrollees report that they will attend a college or university, and another three will obtain some other type of training in Autumn, 1978. Among first-year applicants, 91% plan to attend a college or university. Fifteen percent of the respondents will be employed. Of those furthering their education, 98% will attend a 4-year degree-granting institution. The colleges or schools they select are shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8

Location of Alternative Educational Institutions

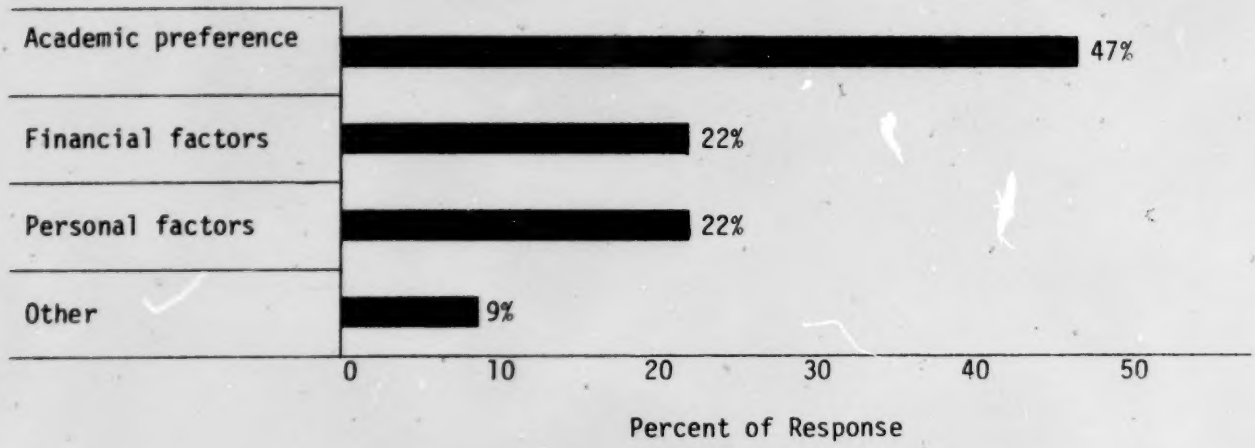


Ninety-four percent will be full-time students. Besides the UW, 96% were offered admission to at least one other institution, and 79% were accepted at two.

Applicants who are able to make the decision on attending the UW for themselves are, of course, in a different position from those whose admission status is the result of University action. The choices these respondents make are important to the University, in that they provide the satisfaction of information on students' needs and preferences among comparable institutions. The decisions these applicants made are based on a number of factors, shown in Figure 9, the strongest of which is a preference for the academic opportunities available elsewhere.

Figure 9

Reasons for Declining UW Offer of Admission



The category "Academic preference" includes factors of scholarly reputation, availability of specific courses or majors, and institutional structure. Personal factors are those of climate, closeness to friends or family, availability of social, cultural or recreational resources, and others. Financial factors reflect tuition and living costs, financial aid, and employment opportunities.

The choice of another college at this time, however, does not preclude attendance at the UW in the future. Seventy-four percent of the respondents plan to re-apply at the University, 36% while they are still undergraduates (6% in the first two years, 30% in the upper-division). The other 28% is undecided as to the time they hope to attend. Those who do not intend to move to the UW give such reasons as the availability of a particular major at their preferred school (18%), the desirability of staying where they started (34%) or the impression that the UW is too big or too demanding (24%).

Only 20% of the respondents who declined admission to the UW plan to come here for their graduate or professional education. These students may see themselves as having more choices than did applicants who were not accepted, since they are no less likely to plan for graduate degrees. The type of school they now attend appears to have no systematic effect on their plans for future education, except insofar as students now at 2-year institutions must arrange to continue their education at other places. For most, this will be the UW, sometime before the end of 1979.

We would not expect that students who made a decision against the UW would report negative effects of their choice, and they do not. The wording of the questions was not designed to elicit statements of disappointment or disillusion with the institution chosen over the UW, but, if the respondents in fact did regret their choice, there was no evidence for this in the answers. The respondents' long-term preference might be for graduation from the UW, but they seemed satisfied with their immediate situation.

Discussion

Three primary findings rise from these data; that applicants of all groups are highly similar in the characteristics under study, that those who do not enter the University of Washington are not for that reason deprived of higher education opportunities, and that applicants, no matter what their immediate plans, hope to continue and/or complete their studies at the UW. Applicants in the four categories share the same experiences and aspirations. While precise numbers differ, the direction of the responses are the same for those who are not accepted into the University, and those who do not accept the offer of admission. The survey's results do not permit us to identify any distinguishing characteristics which might predict applicants' future careers from the variables studied here. Except in the few instances cited in the report, the similarities carry across sex, ethnic origin, parents' education, type of originating school, and present occupation.

The survey results indicate that students who are not offered admission to the UW seek alternative educational resources. For the most part, these are found in other parts of the state's system of higher education. The respondents who rejected offers of admission are also most likely to choose instead another 4-year public college or university in Washington. Very small numbers of either non-admittees or non-enrollees opt for privately supported institutions.

The applicants' plans to enter the UW are deferred rather than abandoned. In particular, they see themselves completing their education here, transferring from other schools, for the most part, during the last two undergraduate years. Their ultimate career aspirations do not appear to be affected by the outcome of their initial interactions with the UW. Despite the growth

of graduate program offerings at other state universities, these respondents still see the UW as the preferred place for their advanced training.

These findings present a highly favorable picture of the applicants' educational opportunities outside the UW. The respondents, of course, may be misleading themselves. It would not be surprising to find that applicants rejected here defensively exaggerate the attractions and benefits of the institutions which do accept them. There is no reason, however, for applicants who in their turn have decided against the UW to take this position, and their responses do not differ from those of their fellows. The questions asked in the survey interviews, or the design of investigation, may have failed to obtain sufficiently precise information, or the respondents may have been unwilling to be candid about their reactions to aborted attempts to enter the UW. Other studies may succeed to tapping these responses, and may substantially change the trend of the findings. In particular, improved response rates, which increase the representativeness of survey data, will heighten the validity of the findings, and may present other conclusions. Lacking these, the results of the present study indicate that applicants not entering the University of Washington are not lost to the state system of higher education, and are likely to value, and seek, entry to the UW at a later stage in their educational careers.

FORM I
Interviewer _____ I.D.# _____ Group _____

Appendix A

Survey of Autumn, 1978 Non-Admittees (EAC-549)

Name _____ Telephone # _____

Date _____ Time _____ Result _____

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

This is _____ of the UW Educational Assessment Center. We are conducting a survey of students who applied for admission to the UW for Autumn, 1978, and I would like to ask you about your plans for the future. Your participation is voluntary, and will have no effect on your application to the UW. Your responses will be held in confidence. Do you have time to talk to me now? *(Conduct interview, or make appointment. Answer any questions, or refer R to the EAC for more information.)*

1. What do you plan to be doing this Fall, from the end of September through December, 1978?

   ____ a. Attend college or other institution of higher education *(Go to Section A)*

   ____ b. Employment/military service (specify) _____ *(Go to Section B)*

   ____ c. Other (specify) _____ *(Go to Section B)*

A. FOR APPLICANTS WHO WILL ATTEND SCHOOLS OR COLLEGES

2. What college or school will you attend? _____

3. *(If not apparent from name)* What type of school is this?

   ____ a. Four-year degree granting

   ____ b. Two year college - certificate or degree granting

   ____ c. Technical or trade school (specify) _____

   ____ d. Other (specify) _____

4. Will you attend full-time or part-time?

   ____ a. Full-time

   ____ b. Part-time--What else will you be doing during this time? _____

   _____

5. What program (degree) will you be following? _____

(Continue with Section B)

B. FOR ALL APPLICANTS

1. What are your future plans for education or a career?

_____

2. Do you plan to obtain any of your future education at the UW?

____ a. Yes - What part of education? _____

- When will this be? _____

____ b. No - Why not? _____

3. Besides the UW, which other schools did you submit applications to? What was the result of these applications?

School	Result
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

GROUP 1 ONLY *(Other groups skip to Section C)*

4. The University's records show that your application for admission to the UW was not complete. Why did you decide not to complete the application procedure?

_____

5. Were you familiar with the requirements for admission?

____ a. Yes - Do you consider the requirements too strict? _____

____ b. No

6. Did you know what was missing from your application?

____ a. Yes - What was missing? _____

____ b. No

7. Did you take a test or exam for admission?

____ a. Yes

____ b. No - Why didn't you take the test? _____

_____

(Continue with Section C)

C. FOR ALL APPLICANTS IN GROUPS 1, 2, and 3

1. What effect did not being admitted to the UW have on your career plans and personal activities?

---

2. What changes have you made as a result of not being admitted?

---

3. Did the UW explain the reason for denial in a way that was clear and understandable?

____ a. Yes

____ b. What did you not understand?

FORM II
Interviewer _____ I.D.# _____ Group _____

APPENDIX B

Survey of Autumn, 1978 Non-Admittees (EAC-549)

Name _____ Telephone # _____

Date _____ Time _____ Result _____

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

This is _____ of the UW Educational Assessment Center. We are conducting a survey of students who applied for admission to the UW for Autumn, 1978, and I would like to ask you about your plans for the future. Your participation is voluntary, and will have no effect on your admission to the UW. Your responses will be held in confidence. Do you have time to talk to me now? *(Conduct interview, or make appointment. Answer any questions, or refer R to the EAC for more information.)*

1. What do you plan to be doing this Fall, from the end of September through December, 1978?

   ____ a. Attend college or other institution of higher education *(Go to Section A)*

   ____ b. Employment/military service (specify) _____ *(Go to Section B)*

   ____ c. Other (specify) _____ *(Go to Section B)*

A. FOR APPLICANTS WHO WILL ATTEND SCHOOLS OR COLLEGES

2. What college or school will you attend? _____

3. *(If not apparent from name)* What type of school is this?

   ____ a. Four-year degree granting

   ____ b. Two year college - certificate or degree granting

   ____ c. Technical or trade school (specify) _____

   ____ d. Other (specify) _____

4. Will you attend full-time or part-time?

   ____ a. Full-time

   ____ b. Part-time--What else will you be doing during this time? _____

   _____

5. What program (degree) will you be following? _____

(Continue with Section B)

B. FOR ALL APPLICANTS

1. Besides the UW, which other schools did you submit applications to? What was the result of these applications?

School	Result
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2. The University's records show that you were offered admission for Autumn Quarter, but that you did not accept this offer. What reasons made you decide against entering the UW? Were these primarily related to preference for another school or college, financial questions, admission into a particular major or program, housing, your personal situation, or other factors?

____ a. College preference

____ b. Financial

____ c. Major or program

____ d. Personal

____ e. Other (specify) _____

_____

3. *(If more than one reason cited)* Which of these reasons was the single most important to you?

_____

4. What are your future plans for education for a career?

_____

5. Do you plan to obtain any of your future education at the UW?

____ a. Yes - What part of education? _____

- When will this be? _____

____ b. No - Why not? _____

I.D.# _____

SS# ___-__-____

Appendix C

Non-Admittees Survey (EAC-549)

DATA COLLECTION FORM

Name _____

Address _____

D1. Status

____ Freshman

____ Transfer

D2. Residence

____ In-state

____ Non-resident

D3. a. Year of birth _____ b. Age _____

D4. Sex ____ M ____ F

D5. Ethnic origin _____

D6. High School Code _____ D7. Date of graduation _____

D8. Previous colleges

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

D9. Degrees earned _____

D10. Parents' college attendance (Non-resident and transfer applications--code for father only.)

____ Father ____ Mother

D11. Parents' colleges

_____ _____

_____ _____